



the pioneer

Established 1865

INSIDE

SPORTS 11
AMERICAN SOFIA KENIN
ADVANCES TO SECOND
ROUND AT PAN PACIFIC OPEN



www.dailypioneer.com

BHUBANESWAR, WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4
PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in Kazan, Tuesday PTI

PTI ■ KAZAN
The Russia-Ukraine conflict should be resolved in a peaceful manner and India is ready to provide all possible cooperation towards it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday during his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Modi held bilateral talks with Putin hours after arriving in this central Russian city to attend the 16th BRICS summit. In his televised opening remarks, the Prime Minister conveyed to the Russian leader that New Delhi "fully supports" the early return of peace and stability in the region. Modi also said that his second visit to Russia in the last three months reflected "close

humanity. India is ready to provide all possible cooperation in times to come," he said. "We have the opportunity to discuss all these issues," he added. On his part, Putin noted the "good condition" of trade turnover between Russia and India. In his remarks, Modi also referred to his summit talks with the Russian leader in Moscow in July. Our annual summit resulted in strengthening cooperation in every field, he said. The Prime Minister also congratulated Putin on Russia's successful presidency of BRICS. Many countries want to join the grouping now, he added. "It is a matter of great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to visit a beautiful city like Kazan for the BRICS summit. India has deep and historical ties with this city," Modi said. "The opening of India's new consulate in Kazan will further strengthen these ties," he added. It is learnt that the Ukraine conflict figured prominently at the meeting. In the summit talks on July 9 in Moscow, Modi told Putin that a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace efforts do not succeed in the midst of bombs and bullets. Weeks later he travelled to Ukraine. In his talks with Zelenskyy, Modi said both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to end the ongoing war and that India was ready to play an "active role" to restore peace in the region. India has been maintaining that the conflict in Ukraine must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.



Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi during a press conference, in New Delhi PTI

We are trying to restore the trust: Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/PTI ■ NEW DELHI/BEIJING
With India and China reaching an agreement on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday said as of now "we are trying to restore the trust" and both sides will have to "reassure each other" to achieve this. His assertion in New Delhi came a day after India announced an agreement with China on patrolling. China on Tuesday confirmed that it has reached an agreement with India to end the standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh. It means both the armies will now resume patrolling in their respective zones as was the practice before May 2020. Following the Galwan clash in June that year, both sides deployed a large number of troops on the LAC leading to heightened tension.

Hoax threats leave financial scars

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

While there seems to be no end to the menace of bomb threat messages targeting Indian airlines, as about 80 more flights, operating on domestic and international routes, received fresh threats from Monday night to Tuesday, it has also had a huge financial impact on the airline operators who already under financial stress, operations stakeholders like security forces logistics and regulatory bodies to under take the drill to ensure safe flight. According to estimates from aviation industry sources, it costs about Rs one to three Crores, on an average, to undertake the security drills and the burden is on all the stakeholders from government to the private agencies. Which means given the total of 180 flights that have undergone the process after the hoax calls an additional burden of about Rs 300 Crore. "Following the laid down protocols, relevant authorities were immediately alerted, and all security procedures strictly adhered to, as per guidance from the regulatory authorities and security agencies," an Air India spokesperson said in a statement. Protocols for the Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC), is convened in the event of a bomb threat call to an aircraft or airport, to tackle the spate of the ongoing "random" Internet-based threats being made to various Indian airlines. On Monday night, the BTAC that assembled at seven airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Pune, Mangalore, Bengaluru and Kozhikode



More CRPF schools get bomb threats

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the crude bomb blast outside the Central Reserves Police Forces (CRPF) public school in Delhi's Rohini area, an email threat was received at the central agency's school in Telangana's Hyderabad on Tuesday threatening to blow up five schools across the country. However, official sources later confirmed that the email turned out to be a hoax. According to police sources, an email was received in a CRPF school in Medchal near Hyderabad threatening to blow up three CRPF schools in Delhi and Hyderabad, and two Kendriya Vidyalayas within the forces' office premises in other cities. The three CRPF schools include two in Delhi



(Rohini and Dwarka), one in Hyderabad (Telangana); while the two Kendriya Vidyalayas are within the paramilitary forces' office premises at Panchkula (Haryana) and Rampur (Uttar Pradesh). Deputy Commissioner of Police, Dwarka, Ankit Singh said, "The CRPF school in Dwarka did not receive any message or mail regarding the same. However, the message was shared to us by stay alert.

Kalyan Banerjee ko gussa kyon aata hai?



Members of Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill leave after a meeting at Parliament House Annex, in New Delhi, Tuesday PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
In a bizarre incident, All India Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament Kalyan Banerjee created a ruckus during a crucial Waqf meeting in Parliament on Tuesday where he smashed a glass water bottle and hurled it towards the Chair. Banerjee injured himself and jeopardised the safety of other

Jagdambika Pal of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), during a heated exchange of words with BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay, a former Calcutta High Court judge. This is the second time Banerjee has made news for odd reasons, the last time he had mimicked a presiding officer of the Parliament. The act was condemned by the President of India, Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues. According to sources, the panel voted nine-eight on a resolution moved by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey to suspend Banerjee for a day for his choice of words for the panel chairman, and for smashing a glass bottle and throwing it towards Pal. After the meeting concluded, Banerjee refused to talk to reporters about the incident. After being administered first aid, Banerjee was seen being escorted back to the meeting room by AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and AAP leader Sanjay Singh.



Officials at the blast site of Ordnance Factory Jabalpur (OFJ), in Jabalpur district, Madhya Pradesh, Tuesday PTI

Blast at Jabalpur Ordnance Factory, many injured

PNS ■ JABALPUR

More than a dozen workers were injured in a powerful blast at the Ordnance Factory Khamera in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district on Tuesday morning, an official said. The blast took place at around 9.45 am when explosive material was being filled in the bombs at a refilling section of the factory, the official from the establishment said. Among the injured persons, two were in a serious condition and admitted to a hospital. Another worker was missing and was possibly trapped under the debris of the section in which the blast took place, he said.

The blast was so powerful that it was even heard by people a few kilometres away, as per eyewitnesses. The Ordnance Factory Khamera is one of the major ammunition production units under the Department of Defence Production. More than a dozen workers received injuries in the blast and efforts were on to locate a missing worker, who was possibly trapped under the debris of the building, the official said. A probe has been ordered into the incident and the exact cause behind the blast will be known after completion of the investigation, he said. Fire brigade and security staff of the factory launched a relief and rescue operation, the official added.

Delhi is most polluted city: IQAir

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even before the arrival of winter, Delhi along with several cities of north India is gasping for clean air as air quality has degraded to alarming levels over the past few days. Based on the real time data, Delhi ranks top on the list of most polluted cities in the country. It was the second-most polluted city in the world on Tuesday, a live ranking on IQAir's a Swiss based air quality monitoring website indicated, after only Lahore in neighbouring Pakistan. AQI in Lahore recorded 394. A layer of smog engulfed Delhi and surrounding areas, including Noida, on Tuesday morning, even as the air quality plummeted to the 'very poor' category at 327, followed by Haryana's Jind where the AQI stood at 311. Meanwhile, out of 36 monitoring stations in the National Capital, 26 are in the red zone, with the AQI recorded in the "very poor" category, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board. These stations



A smog as air quality deteriorates, in New Delhi, on Tuesday Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

include Anand Vihar, Bawana, Dwarka, Jahangirpuri, Mundka, Narela, Patparganj, Rohini, Shadipur, Sonapahar, Wazirpur, Alipur, Ashok Vihar, Aya Nagar, Burari, Mandir Marg, and others. A thick layer of fog was seen in areas like Anand Vihar, Kalkaji, Nehru Place, and Akshardham Temple, as Delhi's air quality continued to deteriorate. Factors contributing significantly to pollution include transportation, stubble burning, and dust pollution, with emissions from transportation accounting for approximately 11.45 percent of Delhi's air pollution, according to the Centre's Decision Support System for Air Quality Management. As the air pollution in Delhi reaches the red zone, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday wrote letters to the transport ministers of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, urging them to ensure no diesel buses from their states plied to the national capital in view of GRAP II restrictions in place. Rai announced a slew of measures, including enhanced water sprinkling to control road dust, use of dust suppressants and deployment of additional traffic personnel to ease traffic congestion, among others.

Bribery charge 'Kansa' suspended from govt job

RAKESH JOSHI ■ BARGARH

Herishikesh Bhoi, who acts as King Kansa in the famous Dhanu Yatra in Bargarh, was suspended from his government job on Tuesday on the charge of demanding bribe. Bhoi had allegedly demanded the bribe from the family of a deceased to provide a Mahaprayana vehicle. He has been fired from his job as a driver at the General Hospital in the district by the Health Department. A case has been also lodged at Bhatli police station against him on the request of the Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO). All eyes would now on the next Dhanu Yatra festival to see if he is given another chance to perform the role of Kansa. Bhoi has been accused of taking a bribe of Rs 3,000 from the family of the deceased to transport body from Bada Sahajbahal village in Gaisilet block. Further investigation was on, said Bargarh CDMO Dr Nirupama Sarangi.



Colleges closed for 3 days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government on Tuesday announced that colleges and universities in 14 districts of the State would remain closed for three days starting from October 23 due to the impending cyclonic storm 'Dana'. Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Deorajan Kumar Singh apprised the Higher Education Secretary the decision regarding the closure of the colleges and universities in the vulnerable districts from October 23 to October 25. All the colleges and universities in Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Bhadrak, Baleswar, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Angul, Khordha, Nayagargh and Cuttack districts would remain closed as a precautionary measure in view of the impending severe cyclonic storm, the SRC said.

Cyclone Dana Focus on evacuation, 250 relief centres ready

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has taken measures to deal with any emergency situation in view of the cyclonic storm Dana, informed Revenue and Disaster Management Minister, Suresh Pujari on Tuesday. A coordination meeting was held with the district Collectors, he said. "A total of 250 relief centres have been reviewed by officials and kept ready. Besides, additional 500 temporary shelters have been made ready including schools and colleges. Those people who will be evacuated will be provided cooked food and medical services. A list of pregnant

women has also been prepared by the Health Department. Women, children and elderly persons are being advised to shift to safer places in the affected areas. Women police officers will be deployed at relief centres," said Pujari. The minister further informed that as usually many people do not vacate their homes apprehending thefts, "we have decided to intensify police patrolling in vulnerable areas". "Adequate stocks of ration have been kept ready along with polythene and other materials. Red alert has been sounded in all ports and the fishermen have returned. We were tracking seven trawlers

since yesterday and the process of their return has started. The government is working in a mission mode to ensure zero casualty," he said. According to the minister, it has been observed by various agencies that there is some deviation in the cyclone's projected path in the past. Hence, keeping in view the probable deviation, the government is taking all precautionary measures after reviewing the past instances. "We have identified such vulnerable districts. Red alert has been issued for nine districts and orange warning for heavy rain in some districts," he added.

PM to Visit Odisha on Nov 15

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Odisha on November 15 and launch a number of schemes in the State. Official sources said Modi would arrive at the Jharsuguda airport by a special aircraft and proceed to Rourkela to attend a programme on the occasion of the birth anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Birsu Munda. The day is also observed as the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas to acknowledge the cultural heritage and contributions of tribal communities. Modi is also slated to launch a 'Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Yojana' of the State



Government on the day. This apart, the PM will lay foundation-stone of the Odia Asmita Kendra and hostels for around 450 primary schools in the State. Notably, ST students will receive a one-time financial assistance of Rs 5,000 under the Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Yojana. The scheme aims to check the drop-out rate among the ST students studying in Classes-IX and X in government and aided schools. ST students passing out from Class-VIII and joining in Class-IX and from Class-X to Class-XI will receive the assistance under the scheme.

In Jaleswar Fake agency defrauds job aspirants of Rs 3 cr

SIBDAS KUNDU ■ BALESWAR
Several job aspirants alleged that they were deceived by a fake placement agency at Jaleswar, which bungled at least Rs 3 crore under the plea of providing jobs.

Jaleswar, assured of providing jobs in overseas countries, mainly in the Middle East, including Iraq, Turkey and Jordan etc and collected Rs 1 lakh from each aspirant in the name of preparing Visa and flight fare.

The fake placement agency later closed its office and the aspirants after learning that they were duped, lodged a complaint with the local police.

The aggrieved youth said the agency not only collected money from job aspirants of Odisha but also from neighbouring West Bengal and Jharkhand.

2 youths from Gajapati crack OCS

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI
Two tribal youths from Gajapati district cracked the Odisha Civil Services Exams 2024 bringing glory to the district. They are Kalinga Kumar Pujari and John Badaraita.



Kalinga belongs to Gadgar village of Chelagada panchayat of RUDayagiri block. He is a BTech. He was working as Local Fund Auditor and posted at Rayagada.

M'ghanj girl donates scholarship money to CMRF

PNS ■ BARIPADA
An 11-year-old girl-student of Mayurbhanj has donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund her entire amount of scholarship money that she had received for her superb academic performance in Class-III exam.



she felt, should be given away for a good cause. Parirupa translated her wish into a reality, when Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently came to Baripada on an official visit and she could give away the money in his hands and informed him of her desire to utilise the money for the depressed and distressed people through the CM Relief Fund.

Many Dalit, tribal lads OCS successful in R'gada

BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA
This time all the Odisha Civil Services achievers of Rayagada are either tribals or Dalits, who come from hinterlands of Rayagada like Kashipur, Ramanaguda, Gunupur and other interior blocks.



Interestingly enough, one of these tribal lads named Sunil Sabar comes from Lanjia Soura tribe, a primarily vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) ordinarily inhabiting on Putasing hills of Gunupur block. He comes from Patli village of Talana GP of Gunupur block. Sunil, 1st OAS from this PVTG community, is ranked 629 in his 2nd attempt.

with rank 647. Having the rank of 450, Maheswar Palaka (SC) from Bhujabala village of Kolnara block is now working as a lecturer in Brahmapur City College. Anadi Charan Sabara coming from Antanjholi village of Ramanaguda block, who is presently continuing as a senior assistant in District Agriculture office, has a rank of 622.

Block Social Security Officer in Padmapur block. Sunil Kumar Kilaka is the son of a retired school teacher named Madhab Chandra Kilaka from Kusumgudi village of Kuragada GP in Muniguda block. He is having rank 481 and working in Khadagpur railways.

Uncertainty over J'suguda pipe water project

RAJKUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA
Despite Rs 450cr spent, 250 villages out of 338 yet to get supply



-Katapalli in Jharsuguda block is still awaiting an electricity connection. Officials have applied for the connection and expect to begin supplying water on a trial basis by mid-November.

Currently, 60 villages in 16 panchayats under Lakhapur block are receiving piped water from the Kusmail plant, with 19 more villages expected to be connected soon. The Tilia plant has supplied water to 22 villages out of a targeted 65, with plans to reach 30 more villages by the end of 2024, according to RWSS Executive Engineer Dillip Behura.

Swachhata Pakhwada NTPC Talcher holds series of events



PNS ■ TALCHER
The NTPC Talcher Thermal reaffirmed its commitment to a cleaner and greener environment by organising a vibrant Swachhata Pakhwada from September 14 to October 2. The initiative aligned with the national "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan", fostered a collective spirit of cleanliness and community engagement.

about cleanliness, both within the plant premises and in nearby communities. These activities included the distribution of sanitation supplies in local schools to promote hygiene among students, a walkathon to encourage community participation in cleanliness efforts, competitions at government schools to inspire students to think critically about cleanliness, and Nukkad Natak (street plays) performed in major market areas to creatively engage the public on the importance of maintaining clean surroundings.

Additionally, a special Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivir was conducted, where cleaning staff were made aware of health-related issues, and a special health check-up was organized for them.

Dhenkanal Lakshmi Puja Heritage walkers explore Chandni Medhas' history

PNS ■ DHENKANAL
Nearly 50 heritage enthusiasts, including young students from Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) and Dhenkanal Autonomous College, thronged the Gajalaxmi Puja pandals and explored the rich traditions behind the "Chandi Medhas" or silver tableaux.

Senior members of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks (DHW) and members from other heritage walk groups were also part of the visiting pandal hoppers under the leadership of convener Prof Suresh Prasad Mishra with

gradually increased and in the meantime, the Kaibalya Bazaar near the Siddha Balaram Temple got one tableau of 140 kg in 2016. The historic town got its third "Chandi Medha" in 2018 at the Gudianali Puja pandal weighing 125 kg. In the same year 2018, Ganesh Bazaar, touted as the largest market in Dhenkanal, got the heaviest "Chandi Medha" in the State with a huge 350 kg of the silver tableau. The fifth "Chandi Medha" was introduced at Lakshmi Bazaar with 150 kg of silver in 2022. This year Jubilee Town-II, Deulshahi Puja Mandap has built a beautiful "Chandi



Medha" of 70 kg. Early in the morning on Sunday, the marchers first went around Gudianali and

then Kaibalya Bazar, Jubilee Town II, Ganesh Bazar, Laxmi Bazar and saw the "Chandi Medha" at Meena Bazar. At

each market, the members of the respective Puja committees welcomed the heritage enthusiasts and provided in-

INBRIEF

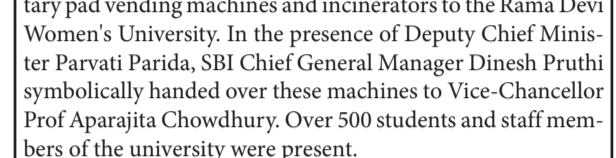
Tapas Pattanayak to be NALCO Director (HR)

Bhubaneswar: Tapas Kumar Pattanayak is set to become Director (HR) of the National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO). Sources said his name has been recommended for the post by the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB). Pattanayak is now serving as Executive Director (HR) at Refineries Headquarters of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL).



SBI donates sanitary pad machines to RD Varsity

Bhubaneswar: The State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle, under Corporate Social Responsibility, has donated four sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators to the Rama Devi Women's University. In the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Parvati Parida, SBI Chief General Manager Dinesh Pruthi symbolically handed over these machines to Vice-Chancellor Prof Aparajita Chowdhury. Over 500 students and staff members of the university were present.



Jindal Panther Cement launches grinding unit

Bhubaneswar: The Jindal Panther Cement (JPC) has commissioned its first cement grinding unit with a capacity of 1.5 MTPA at Angul. This facility, which will utilise approximately 1 MTPA of blast furnace slag from the nearby JSPL's Angul integrated steel plant, is designed to operate at the industry's lowest clinker factor, marking a significant step in the company's decarbonisation strategy. JPC aims to become a leader in low-carbon cement production through this move.

Vedanta hosts IIM Sambalpur students

Jharsuguda: The Vedanta Aluminium recently hosted students from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Sambalpur as part of its Campus Connect initiative. The visit offered the students a unique opportunity to explore Vedanta's state-of-the-art operations and gain insights into the aluminium manufacturing process. They also learned how sustainable businesses are run on a global scale.

1 dies, 3 of Andhra family critically as car hits tree

Malkangiri: A person was killed and three other members of a family were critically injured after the car by which they were travelling hit a tree in the Chirakonda area of Malkangiri district on Tuesday. The family was on their way to Narsinghpada in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Prakash Khila of Murlagada village in the Gudem area of Andhra Pradesh was taking his two daughters and two sons to a residential school at Narsinghpada. The mishap took place when the driver lost control over the wheels.

Letter urges CM 'Instal freedom fighter Narayan Birabar bust in JSpur'

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR
The State Culture Department has finalized a list of eminent personalities to instal their statues at various locations across the State. However, the name of the Kujanga Gandhi and eminent freedom fighter of Jagatsinghpur late Narayan Birabar Samanta is missing from it.

The incident has sparked unhappiness among the people of Kujanga and Paradip areas. Eminent poet and social activist Pitambar Tarai from Kujanga has shot off a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charana Majhi seeking to instal a statue of the late Samanta in Jagatsinghpur district. In his letter, Tarai divulged that late Samanta after being inspired by Gandhiji had quiet studying and joined the freedom movement of the country and led the move-

ment in coastal Odisha during the pre-independence period. Samanta is treated as a contemporary freedom fighter like Gopabandhu Das, Naba Krushna Choudhury, Malati Choudhury, Sarala Devi and Dr Harekrushna Mahatab. During post-independence days he was elected as MLA and occupied the Deputy Speaker post in the Odisha Assembly. He is remembered for his contribution to the establishment of the Paradip Port in the mid-sixties. Following his efforts the first river port was established at Chaumuhani near Paradip and he impressed the then Odisha CM Dr Mahatab for setting up the port at that location. Tarai demanded the installation of a statue of late Samant at Kujanga or Paradip to ensure that the legacies of Samanta remain alive for future generations.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Breathless in Delhi

Delhi's air quality has once again plunged into the 'Very Poor' category, marking the beginning of the dreaded annual pollution season

As the Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 312 on October 21, 2024, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) announced the activation of Stage 2 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR...

A significant contributor to Delhi's poor air quality is the burning of crop residue in neighbouring states like Punjab and Haryana. Despite bans and incentives for alternative disposal methods, stubble burning remains a widespread practice...

PICTALK



People buy lanterns ahead of the Diwali festival, in Solapur

Trump tries hard to win the second term



BHOPINDER SINGH

The traits Trump exhibits on the golf course serve as a metaphor for his approach to life and politics: a willingness to bend the rules and win at any cost

American sportswriter Rick Reilly wrote a book called Commander in Cheat: How Golf Explains Trump...

However, perhaps the most damning reality check for Trump is the fact that both his 'wingman' (former and current) i.e., Vice President Mike Pence and his current running mate, JD Vance, would have the maximum access to Trump...



Trump had shockingly claimed that fame had enabled him to grope women! Then Vance had heeded to his moral conscience as a practising Christian and lamented, 'Fellow Christians, everyone is watching us when we apologize for this man. Lord help us'...



TODAY, THE FORGOTTEN IMAGE OF PENCE IS REFLECTIVE OF THE CONUNDRUM THAT MANY COMMITTED REPUBLICANS FACE IN TRUMP'S CANDIDATURE - HE REFUSES TO SUPPORT TRUMP AFTER "ALL THAT HE HAS DONE" AND CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO ENDORSE A PARTISAN RIVAL, KAMALA HARRIS, EITHER

ly put fealty to the Constitution above the unreasonable demands of a man he had once slavishly addressed as 'my President'...

cannot bring himself to endorse a partisan rival, Kamala Harris, either. This lurking ambiguity in Republican ranks (or amongst the 'undecided') could tilt things decisively in the forthcoming cliffhanger of a Presidential contest...

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAHAYUTI GAINS EDGE

Madam - This refers to the news report, 'BJP releases 99-strong candidate list' (October 21). On one hand, alliance partners of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) are still struggling to finalise the seat-sharing formula for Maharashtra Assembly polls...



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Seeking validation: A necessity more than an add-on to our vanity

Though contentment offers a deep sense of inner peace, validation serves as a crucial motivator

Much to the contrary of the popular belief about happiness being commensurate with the degree of material success, my late father asserted that the key to happiness lies in contentment. Both views have their share of advocates...



others is indeed required for us to stay on course, not simply for the ego boost it brings but also for the motivation it gives us to strive and march forward in making a mark in the world...

When someone validates our work, it serves as a confirmation that we are on the right track. It is a form of recognition that can affirm our abilities, encourage us to push further, and give us the confidence to take risks that we might otherwise avoid...

done." These acknowledgements are crucial motivators. They tell us that our efforts matter, that our contributions are recognised, and that we are moving in the right direction...

Yamuna pollution on the rise



The current condition of the Yamuna River has been raising concerns for the past few days as the festive season arrives. The river is covered with a very thick layer of froth. The froth can cause major health problems, which can affect both human health and wildlife in the areas surrounding the river Yamuna. Now, as we see, pollution levels have reached an alarming stage...

The current condition of the Yamuna River has been raising concerns for the past few days as the festive season arrives. The river is covered with a very thick layer of froth. The froth can cause major health problems, which can affect both human health and wildlife in the areas surrounding the river Yamuna...

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

next 15 years, it will fall even faster. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

IMMIGRANTS FACE UNCERTAINTY

Madam - The escalating diplomatic row between India and Canada will have the more than 4 lakh Indian students studying in Canada worried and concerned about their future. Many have sold everything they owned in India to study in Canada, which is seen as a gateway to a better future...

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN
THE PATH TO TRUE GROWTH

Constant comparison overshadows cooperation, empathy and joy of life



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us, whether we like it or not, have to compete from the time we are born until the time we die. Though most of us indulge in healthy competition all the time, nevertheless, one thing common to all kinds of competitions is the underlying desire to win a victory for the self or to defeat others. While competing, a person brings out their skill, ability, art, acumen, or talent to show that they are superior, stronger, better, more powerful, more skilful, more learned, or more competent than others. It is this habit of making comparisons with others that creates the competition background. That is why we always see this subtle desire in people who are winners, to hear some words of praise about themselves or their performance. To fulfil this ultimate objective of massaging their egos, one does not care if the other person feels disappointed, depressed, defeated and even humiliated, ridiculed, or booted. This drive to be recognised as “better” than others sometimes overshadows the simple joy of participating or improving oneself. To understand this kind of behaviour, one needs to understand human psychology because the roots of comparison and competition have been sown into our minds since our childhood days. From school grades to sibling rivalries, we are conditioned early to pit our success against others’ failures. Hence, they become more rigid with time. We need to understand that the core objective behind the competition is not simply the desire to win, but it is intertwined with the motive of laying aside the softer and nobler sentiments of cooperation, kindness, and gentleness, even if only for a while. In competition, one puts all energies and talents into bogging down or defeating another person, leaving them behind in the race while making a forward thrust to reach



the goal before anyone else. As the famous philosopher Schopenhauer said, “The world is a battle of will and intellect.” But in this battle, one often loses sight of empathy and connectedness, which are essential for human growth.

It may also put a limit on one’s spirit of giving, helping, cooperating and sacrificing. Remember! Anything small and insignificant in the beginning has the potential to grow and become big. Hence, we must not forget that even though a spark or flame of fire may be small to start with, it can reduce a big apartment with valuables to ashes if it grows into a big fire. Thus, we should be careful and vigilant, because if the whole society catches this contagion or infection of selfishness or rivalry, it may spoil the charm of life and the atmosphere in society. Some people link competition to motivation and developing an attitude toward high performance. But they fail to understand that this evil trait to defeat others, which may look like a harmless thing initially, may eventually develop into a spirit of revenge, feelings of hatred or enmity, bitter jealousy, confrontation, hostile attitudes and ugly outbursts. These effects are not limited to the individuals involved but spill over into communities, organisations and even nations. Look at global politics or corporate boardrooms, and you will see this principle at play on a massive scale. Hence, it all depends upon the emotional maturity of a person whether or not he or she is affected. Because this seed of evil, as it grows, takes the form of a big tree with many branches; so, too, does selfishness or the spirit to downgrade others to gain ascendance for the self. It may proliferate into many evils or obnoxious habits. Hence, one must try to curtail selfishness and give up the ambition of winning by vengeance for the applause and praise of the self. Remember! The only competition that should matter to us is the one that takes place within ourselves. Hence, it is better to defeat one’s inner demons first and become victorious from within to be an example for others to follow.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

NEP 2020: A blueprint for transformative education



GURMEET SINGH

While NEP promises radical changes through holistic learning and flexible assessments, implementation challenges continue to hamper its progress

NEP 2020 was founded on the guiding principles of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. This was primarily to prepare the young ones to face the diverse national & global challenges for the present & future. The Policy aims to lead to a multi-disciplinary, holistic under-graduation syllabus, create wider choices of combinations of Subjects, Integration of Vocational Education with regular Subjects and multi-entry and multi-exit points with regular appropriate certification at various stages. The aim is to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth, economy and/or background. This should eventually lead to transformative changes which shall change the lifeline of education in our country. The emphasis is going to be on holistic education, early childhood care, flexible assessments, skill development, integration of technology, teacher training and higher education reforms. These are aimed at designing a learner-centric and inclusive education for a future-ready system:

By embracing these India is poised to provide quality education to everyone with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the 21st century. The motto has been to provide “Equitable and Inclusive Education” to ensure that no child should be denied quality education because of their socio-cultural background and 100 per cent GER is reached by 2030. Looking at all the facts presented alone, one gets a feeling that this is going to be a real game changer in the education system of our country but the reality remains that it has not taken off even after three years of its approval. The major reason is that a majority do not understand the spirit of this very meaningful policy. If implemented in letter and spirit then our country shall be comparable to the best in the world in the field of education. An in-depth analysis and exploring what lies ahead; One can divide this whole NEP-2020 into four main capsules which this Policy envisages:

Teaching in the mother tongue or spoken language, Learn to leave, Teach to Transform and Educate to Empower. These highlighted Capsules shall completely sum up the entire NEP-2020, which none has so far put appropriately and completely. Elaborating each one of these shall drive home all the points: **Teaching in spoken language:** The importance of this cannot be undermined. Original thinking comes only in the mother tongue (spoken languages) and this advantage has never been given to our students in any of our earlier policies. English has always been overemphasised and a wrong notion has been created that English is knowledge whereas the fact remains that it is just a language and not knowledge. Knowledge can always be acquired by knowing a language. Our beginners have always been worried about learning English rather than developing an understanding of a concept in their way, therefore majority of the students are lost in this learning of the English language rather than focussing on the original thinking. This has been given an appropriate weightage under NEP. A student shall learn to



INDIA IS POISED TO PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION TO EVERYONE WITH THE NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO THRIVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE MOTTO HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE “EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION” TO ENSURE THAT NO CHILD SHOULD BE DENIED QUALITY EDUCATION BECAUSE OF THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

develop an understanding of what subjects to learn and what to pick up eventually in higher classes which has not been the case so far. A course used to be thrust upon them. This very important facet has been very appropriately addressed in this.

Learn to Leave: Having decided what course to take up for secondary and higher education, a student used to be trapped forever whether one liked the subject/course or not. (In the older education system for example if one had opted for Physics or Sanskrit: one was stuck with that forever whether one liked these subjects or not) There was no way to move out unless one gave up higher education or started afresh. The other difficulty was that due to some odd circumstances if one had to discontinue the education there was no way to restart unless you lose years/ time, but in this, one could leave anytime or rejoin anytime (Comes under Multi entry/ Multi exit system).

In the present system if one stayed away for a few years one could not come back to education in desired subjects but under NEP-2020 one can restart anytime one’s education by including the credits earned before leaving. Therefore, under the present NEP, no one shall stay away or be denied education because of circumstances. This was not the case in the older system.

Education to empower: Under this education is to give due benefits to society by developing the right kind of skill. For Example, an electronic engineer is not able to do even basic electrical repairs or a mechanical engineer is not in a position to rectify even a basic fault. Integration of vocational courses with regular ones to provide practical skills for employment, benefiting students with diverse academic interests or lim-

ited access to traditional pathways or linking them with one another are some of the hallmarks of the present system.

This is to develop the right syllabus to reduce disparities. Emphasis in this is on equitable access to quality education. Essentially NEP 2020 shall be attempting to reduce unwanted syllabus for comprehensive understanding towards skill-based education.

Teach to transform: the teaching in the older system was not of any speciality. One acquires the right skills through one’s efforts to be useful to society. Under this, it shall be essential to train teachers and educational staff to deliver child-centred education for job placement, which shall be an important feature so far lacking to a large extent.

Challenges: One of the biggest features of this has been the wide choice of subjects that one could take. Now this wide spectrum of subjects will be possible to be taken by students if there is a way to keep a record of a student’s movement and subjects taken. In a Country like ours which has more than 39K colleges, about 1000 Universities and 4.33 crores students (Nearly 80 per cent are in graduation and the remaining 20 per cent are from post-graduation classes), it shall be impossible to maintain a record of this kind unless there is a mechanism similar to computerised banking arrangement which maintains all types of record impeccably. For this an Academic Bank of Credit has been proposed where every institution shall be registered to enable a record of these movements of students, subjects taken and credits earned can be maintained like what is done in banking.

Biggest flaw so far: Unfortunately, to date, not even 50 per cent of Institutions have reg-

istered themselves in this (in ABC) which is the real key to the success of this policy. This is a way to keep records of students’ subjects, their movements and credits earned.

Sharing of resources: Under NEP a wide umbrella of choice of subject, record of early education, movement from one institution to another and credits cleared/earned by a student shall be possible only if the resources are shared by various institutions.

It will be impossible for any particular college to offer all subjects and to offer teaching in a variety of courses unless there is a huge staff to do this. It will be humanly impossible to achieve all this unless sharing is done particularly when online teaching has now come in a big way in our university system.

Similarly, the resources for science laboratories, libraries research facilities as well as Entrepreneurship schemes can be very effectively shared to make the education truly inclusive as per the aims of NEP 2020. Therefore, in conclusion, this policy shall succeed if: Every institution registers with ABC (Academic Bank of Credit) Sharing of resources starts in a big way in earnest in all areas like teaching, especially in online modes, libraries, Laboratories and instrumental facilities; Open schooling system for all without any conditions and Establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India immediately to monitor the registration of ABC etc. It shall not become a roaring success unless all agencies like MOE, UGC etc take concerted efforts to bring about a radical change.

(The writer is a Former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University and Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul; views are personal)

Revolutionising India’s food security: Route optimisation cuts costs, carbon emissions

With over 81 crore beneficiaries, the Govt is now leveraging advanced data-driven route optimisation tools as part of the PM GatiShakti master plan

The Government of India provides free food grains to more than 81 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) making it the largest food security programme in the world. This vast operation—from sourcing food grains from farmers to delivering them to ration cardholders—relies on a complex, decades-old supply chain. The Food Corporation of India (FCI), state procurement agencies, millers, transporters, warehouses, and Fair Price Shops (FPS) all play a critical role in this network. However, its design has historically been shaped by administrative convenience more than scientific optimisation. Supply routes were planned manually by



SANJEEV CHOPRA

state officials, a process prone to sub-optimality, bias and human error. In October 2021, the Prime Minister launched the PM GatiShakti Master Plan aiming to enhance multimodal connectivity and optimise logistics across the country. One of its key pillars, “Optimisation”, envisions selecting the most efficient routes for transporting goods,

thereby saving time and reducing costs. In line with this vision, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) launched a national route optimisation exercise in March 2023, in partnership with the World Food Programme (UNWFP) and the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) from IIT Delhi. This exercise, targeting the annual transportation of 6.8 crore metric tons of food grains through the PDS, marks a transformative step towards building a more efficient and cost-effective food supply chain. The process was comprehensive: geo-locations of warehouses and FPS, along with their capacities and road distances, were collected from each state. Using this data, cus-

tom algorithms were developed for each state to determine the most optimal supply chain routes. More than 50 physical workshops were held by DFPD and FITT officials to guide states in data collection and demonstrate the benefits of route optimisation. These optimised routes were then validated on the ground to ensure they accounted for local conditions, and a state-specific intra-state optimisation tool was developed to allow for adjustments in the supply chain—such as adding or modifying entities like warehouses or FPSs. For instance, Bihar developed an annual movement plan based on its PDS requirements, food grain volume, and monthly transport routes. The customised algorithm factored in different



possibilities of local procurement within the state and the grain required to be sourced from the FCI. This gave the state a clear view of its yearly logistics, allowing for cost-saving adjustments. By choosing the optimal option, Bihar reduced transport distances by 19 per cent, saving over Rs 3.09 crore per month. Similarly, Mizoram optimised its routes by eliminating unnecessary transfers of food grains

between warehouses, achieving a 50 per cent reduction in distance and saving an estimated Rs 1.27 crore monthly. A significant milestone in this effort was the integration of the route optimisation tool with the GatiShakti platform, which now houses geo-locations of FPSs and warehouses across all states. This integration enables the platform to generate the shortest possible motorable routes from FCI godowns to state godowns, and further from state godowns to FPSs. The platform also allows real-time route re-optimisation based on updated infrastructure data (such as new roads) from other ministries. Since March 2023, route optimisation assessments have been completed for 30 out of 31 states, with intra-

state route optimisation tools developed for 15 states so far. Early results from 12 states show tremendous promise, with transportation costs reduced by an estimated Rs 112 crore annually. Once fully implemented across all states, savings could exceed 250 crore per year. This initiative is not only an economic win but also an environmental one. Global food miles—representing the distance food travels from production to consumption—account for nearly one-fifth of total food system emissions. Optimising India’s food distribution routes can contribute significantly to reducing CO2 emissions, aligning with the country’s climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement and its Conference of Parties (COP) targets. The

reduction in fuel consumption will also help conserve foreign exchange reserves. Looking ahead, DFPD is exploring the possibility of earning carbon credits under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), offering states an added incentive to complete the route optimisation process and earn tradable carbon credit certificates. This step would not only strengthen India’s commitment to a climate-smart supply chain but also potentially generate financial benefits. In conclusion, The integration of advanced technologies and data-driven tools is setting the stage for a smarter future in public distribution, one that safeguards both our resources and the planet. (The writer is Secretary, Food & Public Distribution, Govt of India; views are personal)

Pak's special parliamentary panel to nominate new chief justice

Special parliamentary committee, formed to decide on the appointment of Pakistan's next chief justice, will meet on Tuesday to nominate the new top judge from among the three most senior Supreme Court judges.

October 25 and under the old rule, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was set to be the next chief. Under amendments to clause 3 of Article 175A, instead of the president appointing the "most senior judge of the Supreme Court" as the chief justice, the top judge will now be "appointed on the recommendation of the Special Parliamentary Committee from amongst the three most senior" judges of the Supreme Court.

them and be part of this mafia that is destroying the independence of our judiciary?" he asked rhetorically. "We are not going to take part in parliamentary committee, loud and clear." The committee's task is to vet the top three senior judges. Once the name is finalised, it will be sent to the prime minister, who will then forward it to the president for the appointment.

The new process signals a significant departure from the judiciary's long-held autonomy in determining its leadership. Apparently being tired of judicial overreach, the parliament tried to curtail the judiciary's influence in political and governance matters, which the courts were accused of exercising in recent years.

Yellen says isolationism 'made America and world worse off'

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is telling world financial leaders that the US economy has grown stronger because the Biden administration rejected isolationism, offering a barely veiled criticism of former President Donald Trump's policies two weeks before the US election.

This year while lowering its expectations for growth in Europe and China. The IMF expects the US economy — the world's largest — to expand 2.8 per cent this year, down slightly from 2.9 per cent in 2023 but an improvement on the 2.6 per cent it had forecast for 2024 back in July.

or Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris to handle key economic issues, according to an October survey by The Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research. Who wins the US election will also have enormous impacts on global finance and the world's economy.

ism that made America and the world worse off and pursued global economic leadership that supports economies around the world and brings significant benefits to the American people and the US economy."



Former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left) receives the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at Bellevue Palace, Berlin on Tuesday.

Sweden to honour Blinken

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and former NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg will be knighted in Sweden for their role in enabling the Scandinavian country to join the world's largest military alliance.

Initial report shows Liam Payne had cocaine in his system when he died

An initial toxicology report for ex-One Direction singer Liam Payne, who died last week after falling from a third-floor hotel balcony in Buenos Aires, showed that he had cocaine in his system after his death, an Argentine official said.

widely reported in local media on Monday. Argentina's public prosecution is investigating the case — which is not uncommon when a death is sudden or unexpected.

sciousness." Photos purportedly taken from inside Payne's hotel room published by local media showed snowlike powder left on a table and a smashed-in TV screen.

Mystery of downed cargo airplane in Sudan deepens

The mystery surrounding a crashed cargo plane in Sudan reportedly downed by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces deepened on Tuesday as authorities insisted the aircraft had been de-registered in Kyrgyzstan.

Its conflict has killed over 24,000 people, forced millions to flee their homes and has left some families eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive as famine sweeps parts of the country.

the aircraft belonged to the Sudanese military and had been operated by "jihadist militia groups". It said it collected the aircraft's black box "along with crucial documents and intelligence revealing the aircraft's operations" that it did not publish.

Sweden joined almost a year after Finland. Both ended decades of post-World War II neutrality and centuries of broader non-alignment with major powers.

Germany detects first mpox case

Germany's disease control center said Tuesday that a new, more infectious variant of the mpox virus has been detected in Germany for the first time. The Robert Koch Institute said the person was infected abroad but didn't give any further details, including on where the case was being treated.

Germany's disease control center said Tuesday that a new, more infectious variant of the mpox virus has been detected in Germany for the first time. The Robert Koch Institute said the person was infected abroad but didn't give any further details, including on where the case was being treated.

Germany's disease control center said Tuesday that a new, more infectious variant of the mpox virus has been detected in Germany for the first time. The Robert Koch Institute said the person was infected abroad but didn't give any further details, including on where the case was being treated.

Germany's disease control center said Tuesday that a new, more infectious variant of the mpox virus has been detected in Germany for the first time. The Robert Koch Institute said the person was infected abroad but didn't give any further details, including on where the case was being treated.

MAMTA CHILDREN OF THE WORLD, DELHI. Plot No. 5, PSP Pocket, Sector-8, Dwarka, New Delhi. TEL: 011-45681521 / 8383818700. FOUNDED CHILDREN-DISPLACED FROM PARENTS.

CORRIGENDUM NO-2 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO. N. 7, HQ EPC, EI 2024-25 DTD. 18-10-2024. Corrigendum No. 2 has been issued against Tender No. N. 7, HQ EPC, EI 2024-25.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Asha Pandey who is the owner of the property...

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Harinder Yadav who is intending to purchase the Plot No. A-55, Block No. A, measuring 150 Sq. Yds...

India eye Paris revenge against Germany in Test series as international hockey returns to Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

International hockey will return to the capital after a 10-year gap when Olympic bronze-medallists India take on world champions Germany in a two-Test bilateral series starting here on Wednesday, aiming to test some new faces and extract revenge for a recent heartbreak inflicted by the visitors.

For the last 10 years, the capital's Major Dyan Chand National Stadium, once considered the spiritual home of the game, has not hosted any international match. The last game played here was the 2014 Hero World League Final, although inter-departmental hockey has been held here occasionally. But the two Tests against the world No.2 and Paris Olympics silver-winning outfit on Wednesday and Thursday would be a perfect comeback for the sport. It has been learnt that over 12,000 fans have already registered for the free tickets on offer through a private ticketing portal. The National Stadium has a seating capacity of just over 16,000. The two Tests hold great



significance for Indian hockey, which is on an upswing following back-to-back Olympic bronze medals in Tokyo and Paris. In the French capital, the Indians, under the talismanic and in-form Harmanpreet Singh's leadership, lost 2-3 to Germany in a closely-

contested semifinal. "This series is not just about the two teams playing; it's about reviving the spirit of hockey in Delhi. We hope this will inspire more young players from the region to take up the game," Harmanpreet had said after the rubber was announced.

That sentiment aside, India also have a very good opportunity to avenge their loss in Paris. But the Germans will be a hard nut to crack as they are the reigning world champions and displayed that fortitude in Paris, going down only in the shoot-out to Netherlands in

the gold medal match. Going by rankings, the Germans are favourites as India are currently placed fifth in the world but in modern hockey, there is hardly any difference between the top 10 teams and anyone can beat a high-placed rival on their day. In the last five encounters between the two sides, India hold an edge, having won three and lost two. India have been on a high since the Paris Olympics. A new-look team retained the Asian Champions Trophy title in September, beating hosts China 1-0 in the final. That was India's fifth ACT title. The Indians have fielded a mix of youth and experience for the two matches, thereby highlighting chief coach Craig Fulton's vision of planning for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. The most notable inclusion in the squad is defender and drag-flicker Varun Kumar, who is returning after a sabbatical from the game that was forced by allegations of sexual harassment by a junior volleyball player. His name has since been cleared in the matter.

The Indians will be led by star drag-flicker Harmanpreet, who is enjoying the form of his life and mid-fielder Vivek Sagar Prasad will be his deputy. The hosts, however, will continue to miss the services of mid-fielder mainstay Hardik Singh, who is still recovering from an injury he sustained at the Olympics. Fulton drafted in some new faces in mid-fielder Rajinder Singh and striker Aditya Arjun Lgale, who will be making their international debut. Besides Vivek, veteran Manpreet Singh will be in charge of the mid-field. Striker Mandeep Singh, who was rested for the ACT, will look to dazzle upfront in the company of Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, and Dilpreet Singh among others. The Indian goal will be manned by Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera, who lived up to expectations in the ACT in Hulunbuir, China after the legendary PR Sreejesh's retirement. The two matches will provide the newcomers and comeback-men a chance to prove their mettle in front of the team management and national selectors.



American Sofia Kenin advances to second round at Pan Pacific Open in Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

Former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin has extended her perfect record against Wang Xinyu, beating the 10th-seeded Chinese player 6-1, 6-4 in a first-round match at the Pan Pacific Open on Tuesday. The 25-year-old American, who won the Australian Open in 2020 and was a French Open finalist the same year, won her fourth straight match over Wang. Her previous victories over Wang were twice at Wimbledon - in 2021 and 2023 - and at Auckland, New Zealand last year. Kenin beat Garbiñe Muguruza in the Melbourne Park Grand Slam singles final

in 2020 and lost to Iga Swiatek in the French Open final a few months later. After her Australian Open win, she achieved her highest ranking of No. 4, but a series of injuries over the past several years has seen her ranking slip to her current No. 155. She also had to withdraw from the 2021 US Open due to COVID-19. Kenin was joined in the second round by Canadians Bianca Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams for the US Open title in 2019, and Leylah Fernandez, who won their opening matches Monday. The top-seeded player in the Pan Pacific this year is Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen.



Zverev sympathises after routing local wild card in Vienna

AP ■ VIENNA

No. 3-ranked Alexander Zverev was sympathetic for Joel Schwartzler after hammering the 18-year-old wild card in his hometown debut at the Erste Bank Open. Zverev won by a quick 6-2, 6-2 then gave 347th-ranked Schwartzler, appearing in his second ATP tour-level match, encouragement when they met at the net. "When you come to your home tournament and probably the biggest crowd you have played in front of, as an 18-year-old and you're playing the world No. 3, it's not the easiest thing in the

world," Zverev said. "I've been there. I did that as a 17-year-old in Hamburg, where I got to the semifinals and all of a sudden had a sold out stadium and was playing against a certain David Ferrer. The match was over half an hour later and I won one game. I know exactly how (Schwartzler) feels. It's not an easy situation to be in but he's a wonderful player and he's going to have a wonderful career." Zverev's 60th win of the year equalled his season best from 2018. In other matches, Italians Matteo Berrettini and Flavio Cobolli were also winners.

Hockey, shooting, cricket, badminton among major sports axed from 2026 Glasgow CWG

PTI ■ LONDON

In a body blow to India's medal prospects in the Commonwealth Games, key sports such as hockey, badminton, wrestling, cricket and shooting have been dropped from the 2026 edition by host city Glasgow, which unveiled a pruned roster of 10 disciplines to keep the event budget-friendly. Table tennis, squash and triathlon have also been axed in a bid to limit the cost and streamline logistics given that only four venues will host the entire showpiece. The total number of events at the Games will be nine fewer compared to the 2022 Birmingham edition. "The Games will include 10 sports - striking a balance between ensuring the event has a multi-sport feel and the need to manage financial and operational risk," the Commonwealth Games Federation said in a statement. "The sports programme will include Athletics and Para Athletics (Track & Field),

Swimming and Para Swimming, Artistic Gymnastics, Track Cycling and Para Track Cycling, Netball, Weightlifting and Para Powerlifting, Boxing, Judo, Bowls and Para Bowls, and 3x3 Basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball," the Commonwealth Games Federation said in a statement. The 23rd edition of the Games is scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 2, marking Glasgow's return as host after 12 years. "The Games will take place across four venues -- Scotstoun Stadium, Tollcross International Swimming Centre, Emirates Arena - including the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, and the Scottish Event Campus (SEC). Athletes and support staff will be housed in hotel accommodation," it added. The roster is a massive setback to India's medal prospects given that bulk of the country's medals came from the removed disciplines in the past editions. Shooting was never expected to return



after being dropped from the Birmingham programme four years ago, owing to logistics. While announcing the Glasgow schedule, the CGF said "Glasgow 2026 will feature a 10-sport programme concentrated across four venues within an eight-mile corridor". This ruled shooting out of the roster as the Barry Buddon centre in Dundee -- the venue during the 2014 CWG -- is more than 100km away from Glasgow. Also, archery

continued to be ignored. The sport last featured at the Games in the 2010 Delhi edition. Glasgow Green and the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, which hosted hockey and wrestling in 2014, has been dropped from the list of venues, while Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, where badminton was held that year, will be used only for cycling this time. Aside from cost, hockey's exclusion could also be down

to the fact that the Games are being organised close to the World Cup that is scheduled two weeks later from August 15 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands. The Australian state of Victoria was the original host of the 2026 edition but pulled out last year due to rising costs. Scotland then stepped in to save the Games. Hockey's omission from the Games would be a significant blow for India. The men's team has won three silver and two bronze medals, while the women have also shone, clinching three medals, including a historic gold in the 2002 Games. In badminton, India has racked up an impressive 31 medals -- 10 gold, eight silver, and 13 bronze. Notably, the nation was to enter the 2026 edition as defending champions in men's and women's singles, as well as men's doubles. Shooting was a stronghold for India, with a staggering 135 medals to its name. The count included 63 gold, 44 silver, and 28 bronze.

The wrestling competition has yielded 114 medals for the nation, including 49 gold, 39 silver, and 26 bronzes. After the cricket's reintroduction in 2022, the Indian women's team claimed a silver. Para-athletes have been a part of the Games since the 2002 Manchester edition and will continue to be there in the 2026 edition as well. "Para sport will once again be fully integrated as a key priority and point of difference for the Games, with six Para sports included on the sport programme," CGF said. The CGF said that the Games will deliver over 100 million pounds of "inward investment into the city" and is expected to add an economic value of over 150 million pounds for the region. The body asserted that all this would be possible thanks to a model "that has been specially designed to not require public funding for the delivery of the Games."



Neymar back after a year out and helps Al-Hilal in Asian Champions League

AP ■ AL AIN

Neymar returned to action after a year out through injury and helped Al-Hilal beat Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates 5-4 in the group stage of the AFC Champions League Elite. Neymar signed for the Saudi Arabia club in August 2023 but played only five times before tearing an anterior cruciate ligament last October. He came off the bench 369 days later for the four-time Asian champion with 13 minutes remaining at Al Ain. He almost scored

immediately when his low shot from left of the area shaved the post. In a thrilling match between Al-Hilal and the defending champion, Renan Lodi gave Al-Hilal the opener after 26 minutes. Soufiane Rahimi, the tournament top scorer last season, leveled soon after. By the break, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Salem Al-Dawsari put Hilal 3-1 ahead. Mateo Sanabria pulled a goal back just after the hour but Al-Dawsari scored twice more to complete a hat trick, and Rahimi achieved the same feat to make it 5-4.

The win maintained Al-Hilal's perfect record in Asia after three games. Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli won at Qatar's Al-Rayyan 2-1 thanks to goals from Gabri Veiga and Firas Al-Buraikan. Iraq's Al-Shorta drew with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor 0-0, and Qatar's Al-Sadd defeated Iran's Persepolis 1-0. Al-Nassr and Cristiano Ronaldo are in action on Tuesday against Esteghlal of Iran. The game was moved from Tehran to Dubai due to the security situation in Iran.

India eye top spot, Bangladesh seek crucial draw in SAFF showdown

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

With a semifinal spot already secured, India will look to reaffirm their dominance when they take on Bangladesh in their final Group A match of the SAFF Women's Championship here on Wednesday. For Bangladesh, a win would hand them the top spot in Group A. As things stand now, India lead the table with three points, while second-placed Bangladesh have a superior goal difference (0) against Pakistan (-3), with both teams sitting on one point each. A draw would leave Bangladesh as group runners-up with two points. The Blue Tigresses clinched their place in the semifinals with a commanding 5-2 victory over Pakistan but now their focus shifts to topping the group and avenging a painful memory of 2022. In that edition, Bangladesh dealt a shocking blow on India by ending their unbeaten streak in the championship with decisive 3-0 win in the group stage. It marked the first time India had lost to their South Asian rivals in SAFF history, and the Blue Tigresses will be eager to



set the record straight. "We have faced Bangladesh before, and we watched their last game against Pakistan. Our sole focus now is to win this match," skipper Bala Devi said. "We have both senior and young players and we are prepared to push for a win. We have had productive training sessions, and I hope we can put what we have practiced into action." As the captain, I aim to lead by example and support the team in every way. Bangladesh has some fast and

youngful players, but I believe our mental strength gives us an edge, which will be crucial in tomorrow's game," added the 34-year-old from Manipur. Head coach Santosh Kashyap has led the team through five days of training in Kathmandu, preparing for the challenges that lie ahead against Bangladesh. He has carefully assessed all the potential threats posed by the opposition. "Tomorrow's match will be challenging, as Bangladesh are a strong side with a

foreign coach and have solid tactical plans. Although we have already booked a spot in the semi-finals, we are taking it one game at a time, aiming to win every match. "I prefer playing attacking football because it's not only effective but also entertaining for everyone. It's a style that I, as well as the players, enjoy, and we will try to maintain that momentum," Kashyap said. Defender Dalima Chhibber, who was named the Most Valuable Player in the 2019 SAFF Women's

Championship, is making her return to the tournament after missing the 2022 edition. She was absent last time due to playing three seasons in Canada, but now she's back and ready to compete in the SAFF Championship once again. Bangladesh and Pakistan are currently tied on one point each after a 1-1 draw in their group-stage match. For Bangladesh, the absence of coach Golam Rabbani Choton, along with key players like defender Akhi Khatun and Anai Mogini, will be felt. However, the team have brought in fresh talents, including young players such as Afeida Khandakar, Matsushima Sumaya, and Airin Khatun. "We are coming up against an Indian team, who, in my opinion, are probably the best team in the tournament," Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler said. "They are very disciplined and organised in their manner and their demeanour of actually how they walk around the hotel. I think it'll be quite an attacking game. The most important thing is to try and share out the workload with all our players."

